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EDUCATION VERSUS BUSINESS

A DISCUSSION

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The editorial in the December issue of the *Elementary School Teacher* is needed. The problem is with us, and it is time that we become conscious of it to a greater extent than we have been. It is not my experience that the line can be drawn between these two types of social interest as is stated by the editor. I will not attempt to show that there are business enterprises which have the broader outlook—although that can be done, I am sure; but there are many schools which do dare to adopt “admission requirements” other than those of Dr. Barnardo. Only today I spent some time in a great school which has room only for those who are wealthy. Thirty per cent. of its income is profit, yet some of its salaries are scarcely living wages. Another school, which provides a large number of places at free tuition, is carefully examined by observers to find what mercenary motive is hidden behind this plan. The commercial spirit is strong in our private schools; college-entrance requirements are a definite bar to certain students who would profit by higher education of the right kind, and they even dominate the secondary schools, establishing the same exclusion there.

In some cases exclusion is too little practiced. I remember one social reformer whose household constantly suffered because she would take in to her own service those strays whom she could not locate elsewhere. I have known public schools in which teachers and pupils alike were unable to do reasonable work because of the presence of defectives who had been disturbing elements for years without receiv-

ing any benefit. Of one school it was asked: "Is this a school or a hospital" In such cases I have not hesitated to remove the cause of trouble, even when I had no better place for the child in question. I believe, however, that this is a temporary condition, and that we shall have schools in charge of a group of men and women whose work it will be to meet every type of educational need, whether of child, or of adult, normal defective, or delinquent. But I do not now know the community where this is done. A number of social institutions are working, sometimes in complementary relations, sometimes at cross-purposes, but as yet in most cases separately and at haphazard. School systems can as yet only look at the better state as an ideal. No one of them has yet shown us that it can be done.

A teacher recently said of a schoolman: "I am surprised to learn that he was once a railroad man. I cannot think of him as dealing with those selfish interests. His work belongs in the broader field where human beings are concerned. The listener then contrasted to her the work of two brothers, one in railroad service, the other in a school. He pictured the duties and opportunities of the former, the men he had helped to grow, the positions for which he must employ men, a certain percentage of whom were sure each year to be killed in serving the public. He ended by saying: "There are two classes of men—those who work selfishly and those who have a broader vision, and both are found in business, and both are found in the school."

Hazing in schools, church decisions, insurance and political graft among many pressing issues show a defect common to our social institutions and not confined to business alone; we have a responsibility not only for a meeting of conditions as we find them, but for doing our best to make advances—to change conditions for the better.